



## BRIEFING STATEMENT

# BLM-MONTANA/DAKOTAS

SOUTH DAKOTA FIELD OFFICE • 310 ROUNDUP STREET • BELLE FOURCHE, SOUTH DAKOTA 57717 • WWW.BLM.GOV/MT

March 2012

### SUBJECT: EXEMPTION AREA AND FORT MEADE ACEC WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE PROJECTS

#### I. SUMMARY:

The South Dakota Field Office is addressing hazardous fuels buildup in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) in the Exemption Area near Lead and Deadwood, and within the Fort Meade Recreation Area (FMRA) Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) adjacent to Sturgis in northwestern South Dakota.

#### II. BACKGROUND:

The Exemption Area consists of 22,530 acres that were exempted from the Black Hills National Forest due to the complex mineral survey and public land configuration. The BLM administers federal lands (5,220 acres) within the Exemption Area. The rest is private, city, and state-owned land. The Fort Meade Recreation Area ACEC consists of 6,693 acres and is unique and notable for its place in western history. The FMRA is adjacent to the city of Sturgis, the Fort Meade Veterans Administration Compound and Hospital, a national cemetery, Sturgis High School, and private, city, and state-owned lands.

Within the Exemption Area and FMRA are several identified “communities at risk” including Lead, Deadwood, Central City, Pluma, Englewood, Maitland, and Sturgis, as well as numerous rural subdivisions. There are approximately 3,975 acres of BLM-administered forested lands within half a mile of these communities.

In 2003, a Wildland-Urban Interface Plan was completed for the Exemption Area. Implementation began by treating fire containment zones – treatment buffers along existing roads or trails that would provide safe access for fire crews – and removing standing dead trees in the Grizzly Gulch Fire area within half a mile of Deadwood. Work continues to be planned, prioritized, and treatments implemented in coordination and conjunction with the Lawrence County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).

In 2008, the FMRA ACEC Environmental Assessment was completed. Treatments implemented meet multiple resource objectives that include fire, fuels, wildlife, forestry, recreation, grazing, visual resources and cultural resources. Treatments are multi-funded and are prioritized by the South Dakota FO staff.

Both mechanical and prescribed fire treatments will continue throughout both these areas to decrease fuel loading, reduce the risk of wildfire, and improve overall forest/rangeland health.

Within the Exemption Area, mechanical treatments began in 2002 around the community of Lead. Mechanical treatments within the FMRA began in 2008. These mechanical projects have been completed utilizing stewardship contracts, timber sale contracts, IDIQ contracts, cooperative agreements, and BLM force account crews. Slash created from treatments has been piled, masticated, and chipped.

To date, the BLM has completed 2,713 acres of mechanical treatments, 2,191 acres of pile burning, and 3,466 acres of broadcast burning within these wildland-urban interface areas. An additional 800 acres of mechanical treatments are currently in progress and should be completed by the end of 2012.

Through the Lawrence and Meade County CWPPs and BLM Community Assistance program, an additional 851 acres of mechanical treatments on private and city-owned property have been completed. Most of these treatments are close to or adjacent to BLM lands within/near the Exemption Area and FMRA.

#### III. PUBLIC INTEREST:

The planning process as well as the implementation is a collaborative effort among the BLM, Forest Service, South Dakota Division of Forestry, South Dakota Division of Wildland Fire Suppression, Lawrence County, Meade County, cities of Lead and Deadwood, Lawrence County Fire Chiefs Association, private landowners, and the National Wild Turkey Federation.

#### CONTACTS:

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